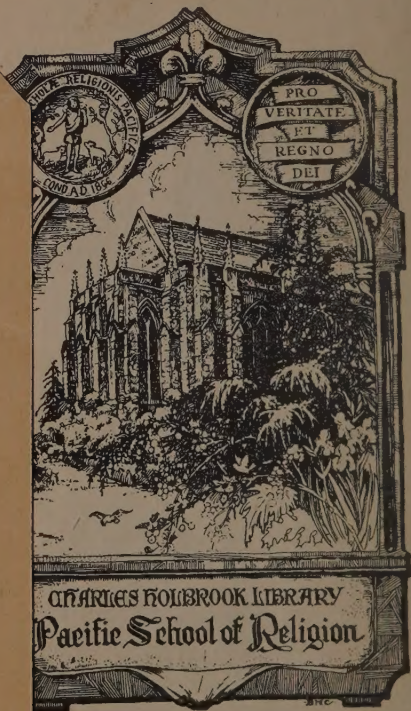


**Buddha,
Buddhism
And Burma.**

BQ
4022
B833
1913
GTU
Storage



Gift of
Univ. of California
In Memory of

H C Hermann

*BUDDHA,
BUDDHISM, AND BURMA.*

N/6



BUDDHA, BUDDHISM, AND BURMA

I

*The Buddhism of the Buddha
and the Buddhism of Burma*

BY JOHN MCGUIRE, D. D.

II

*Gotama Buddha and the
Changing of the Truth*

BY F. D. PHINNEY, M. A.

RANGOON
AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION PRESS
1913

4022
B833
1913

51030

~~OK23~~
~~B859~~

NOTES.

These two articles were first published under different titles, the first in the *Missionary Review of the World*, New York, and the second in the *Missionary Magazine*, Boston. Each has been rewritten for publication in this booklet form, and it is hoped that they will thus answer some of the questions asked by the many travellers who now visit Burma, and be of interest to many dwellers in Burma as well.

The first edition of this booklet raised an unexpected amount of criticism, especially on the part of Burman Buddhists, due very largely to the mistranslation of certain words, and the misinterpretation of certain other statements. In this second edition the endeavor has been made to clarify every statement so that the same mistranslation and misinterpretation cannot be repeated; and further to substantiate from Buddhist authorities certain statements to which objection was taken.

The Buddhism of the Buddha and the Buddhism of Burma.

The differences between the Bible and the sacred books of other religions are fundamental and abysmal. **The Bible and other sacred books.** God could not have inspired them all. In the Book of Esther, for example, the name of God does not occur, but the book holds its place in the canon. If, however, it should teach that there is no God in the universe and no soul in man; if it should teach the doctrine of *karma* and of transmigration, should we be able to believe that it was inspired by the same Spirit of Truth who taught another writer to say: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and "man became a living soul"? God is not the author of confusion. "Because there are some virtues woven into heathenism," said the late Dr. Ashmore, "it does not follow that God made heathenism. God made gold, but He did not work it up into graven images. God made grain, but He did not make it into whisky. God made the natural virtues, but He did not organize them into Confucian and Shinto systems of ancestor worship and king worship." In the book of Ecclesiastes, the preacher truly says: "Lo, this have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." "Undoubtedly," says Dr. Robert E. Speer, "God has not forsaken any part of this

world, and He has been educating mankind, but that does not entitle us to charge to Him all that has found place in the life and thought of men. We are bound to exempt God from responsibility for whatever is discordant with His character. The problem of the divine education of the human race is still unsolved, and what we have to deal with to-day are the simple facts of the world. What religions are actually acquainting men with the character of God to-day, and making them sons of God and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit of God? This is our practical question."

Without doubt the most remarkable, and in some respects the greatest, of the non-Christian **Buddhism a great system.** systems is Buddhism. It is claimed, and by most scholars the claim is conceded, that the Buddha, in the 2,500 years since he appeared upon the earth and attained Nirvana, has had more disciples than any other teacher, not excepting even Jesus, the Christ. It is also claimed by Buddhists of the present day that there are at this time more followers of their system than of any other faith. But *vox populi* is not *vox dei*. The truth or falsity of a system cannot be determined by the number of its nominal followers. Still, these statements are interesting, and indeed, surprising. We had not thought, perhaps, that there were so many Buddhists. They, however, need qualification, for they are misleading, especially to a Christian, who would naturally regard the

profession of faith in one religion as excluding one from being counted at the same time as belonging to another and a different religion. Christianity is exclusive, but Buddhism is a parasitic faith, able to entwine itself about other religions and itself live without displacing them. Thus it is that Shintoists, Taoists, Confucianists and even Animists are also called Buddhists. Buddhism has advanced by being grafted on to other faiths, and, without changing the nature of the fruit, has yet given to it a flavor of its own. There has never been a land of which it may truly be said that Buddhism replaced the ancestral faith and itself became the one religion, out and out, of the people.

How it has grown.

Buddhism in its origin was a protest against Brahmanism. In the religion of the early Hindus there were the germs of a faith in God, the Creator. This is shown from the Rig Veda, a collection of over 1,000 poems, not all belonging to one period, but representing early Indian literature. The development of thought, however, was not as it was in Israel, in the way of clarifying and purifying the idea of the divine, until the mind should arrive at the conception of one God, almighty in power and infinite in wisdom and holiness; but rather was it toward a multiplication of gods, faith in which, during the period from 900-700 B. C., was undermined by speculation, until at length there was created a new ground of religious thought in the belief in

Buddhism in its origin.

the undisturbed, unchangeable, universal Unity which lies back of this world of impermanence, and to which those who are delivered, on leaving this world, return. Thus the way was prepared for the Buddha, who when he appeared, about 500 B. C., rejected the many gods of the popular faith, and built his system upon what he regarded as the unchangeable, universal law of the universe.

Tyranny of Brahman priesthood. At this time Brahmanism, the religion of the day, was a hardened and petrified system of caste and ceremonialism. The offering of sacrifices had been developed by the Brahmins into a ritual which was practically the whole of religion. This placed the people in their power and enabled them to fatten upon the offerings. It was a dreadful tyranny, a merciless and cruel oppression of the people.

Gotama becomes the Buddha. Gotama was twenty-nine years of age, it is said, when, in his search for deliverance, leaving his wife and child, he went forth to the homeless life. This action on his part was not so strange at that time as it would now seem among us. It was, perhaps, a frequent and familiar incident in the life of the day. He at first sought the truth by the way of asceticism, but found it not; and asceticism and self-torture for its own sake have no place in the system of the Buddha. At last, after six years of search, sitting under a banyan tree (called from this the Bo-tree, from *budh*, to know), as the fruit and result of his own thought, and of the

merit obtained in former existences, the truth dawned upon him, and from that time Gotama became the Buddha, the Enlightened One.

Looked at from the practical side and in the light of the need of his time, the teaching of the Buddha came as a great blessing to India. It was no **Benefits of his teaching.** small thing in an age of priestcraft and ceremonialism, to have a voice lifted up in the wilderness calling for personal purity and holiness as the only way of deliverance, to be wrought out by one's self without dependence upon a priest. Gotama did not make war upon caste, and yet at that time, when caste had fixed great gulfs between brother men, it was no small thing to have an order established which was democratic, and into which all men, regardless of caste, might be admitted. It was a blow at caste. As for the home, the system of the Buddha made war upon it by enjoining monkhood, and it was declared that "the life of a woman is always darkness;" and yet even thus her hard condition was improved, for she was permitted to become a nun on the same condition that a man could become a monk, and she was not immured in a zenana, and the evil of child marriage was not encouraged, and to-day does not exist in Buddhist lands. And it may further be said, to the praise of the Buddha, and as a proof of his enlightenment, that his teaching was a protest against the whole system of superstition which the Brahmans had created.

But let us now examine the system a little more closely. What Gotama found under the Bo-tree, what made him the Buddha, was the knowledge of the so-called Four Noble Truths. The first of these is that sorrow is

universal. To say that there is no bright side to

**The Four
Noble Truths.**

life—that *all* is sorrow, seems to us a hideous untruth. But we are Christians. Let us put ourselves back, if we can, to that place and time, and look out upon life as Gotama saw it—no God, no Helper, no one to whom we may lift up a prayer, and nothing before us but an endless series of births and deaths, meaningless and resultless. Such a view of life darkens the world and overcasts the heavens with clouds. And so the light which this noblest and best man was able by his own uninspired thought to obtain was only darkness.

The second Noble Truth is that *desire* is the cause of sorrow. What is meant here is the thirst for continued existence, for sensual pleasures, and for worldly prosperity. All desires tend to evil; an emotionless state is pictured as a most desirable and glorious attainment. How desire comes to be the cause of existence—what the nexus is—is a mystery known only to a Buddha.

The third Noble Truth is that in order to the cessation of suffering there must be the eradication of desire. This only states the obvious fact that the removal of the *cause* is necessary in order to a cessation of the *result*.

The fourth Noble Truth is merely the method by which *desire* is to be eradicated and deliverance obtained. It is the Noble Eightfold Path: right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditation. With reference to these beautiful phrases it is necessary to make only the one observation, that we must not read into them a *Christian* meaning. They must be interpreted in the light of and in harmony with the system to which they belong.

The idea of a Supreme Being Gotama rejected, and characterized discussion of the subject as a "profitless inquiry." This was a fatal mistake, but from what we know of his environment we can not greatly wonder at it. He thought it better to believe in no god at all than to believe in myriads of them; and his system of salvation is remarkable, for in it there is no God, no altar, no sacrifice, and no prayer. The Buddha taught (and it was one source of his power) that a man can save himself here and now, by his own unaided efforts, apart from and independent of the gods. The phrase, "save himself," however we must not take in its Christian sense. Perhaps the most distinctive teaching of the Buddha, and that by which he most widely separated himself from the past, was his denial of the doctrine of a "soul" in man. Speculation in Gotama's day had almost reached the point of atheism. He took the final step. And if there

**No God in
Buddhism,**

And no Soul.

is no God in the universe, of course there is no soul in man. Gotama was logical in this. Moreover, if transmigration is a true doctrine, then there is no such thing as a *human* species distinct from all other forms of life; man differs from the lower animals only in having a better *karma*. Consistently with the theory, the Buddha held that the *self* or personality has no permanent reality. It is the result of certain elements coming together—a combination of faculties and characters. No one of these elements is a person or soul, or self, but to their combination the name *self* is popularly given. Nothing passes on from the old life to the new one except the *karma*, the force which tends to bring about a new combination of *life-elements*. It is only a terrible ignorance which can lead one to think, "I am;" and the thought, according to Buddhism, is one of the worst forms of heresy.

Nirvana. This teaching as to *God* and the *soul* will help us to understand the Buddhist Nirvana, as to whether it is annihilation or not. In Brahmanism Nirvana meant the cessation of *soul-life* by its reabsorption into Brahm, the *world spirit*. But in Buddhism there is no Brahm and no soul, hence the end of rebirth is, logically, the end of existence. Many, however, do not acknowledge this, but hold Nirvana to be a kind of unconscious existence in which the mind, having vanquished desire and destroyed the elements of physical life, knows nothing and feels nothing. But this evidently is a distinction

without a real difference, as such an existence, if it can be called an existence, is practically annihilation. It should be remembered that the Buddha did not expressly teach annihilation as the *summum bonum* of his system; he always refused to make an explicit statement on the subject, thinking it better, apparently, to concede this much to the weakness of human nature.

No God, no soul, annihilation as the goal and end of life—these form the dreary triad of doctrines which lie at the base of the Buddha's system. They are not, like the great basal truths which God gave the early Hebrews, capable of more and more development with increasing light; but they are rather themselves the *end* of a development, which, starting right, turned off in the wrong direction. And let us observe that these postulates have never yet in all the years since their first promulgation been able to get for themselves a place in the affections and faith of any race or nation. Individuals here and there have accepted them, but a whole people never. Men can not live upon negations; affirmation is more necessary than bread. Wrong at the foundation, untrue at the root, Buddhism has never had a doctrinal basis which could hold it together. Hence, as Sir Monier Williams has said, "It passes from apparent atheism and materialism to theism, polytheism and spiritualism. It is under one aspect mere pessimism; under another, high

A dreary triad.

Lack of doctrinal basis,

morality; under another, a variety of materialistic philosophy; under another, simple demonology; under another, a mere farrago of superstitions, including necromancy, witchcraft, idolatry and fetichism."

And of social basis. In considering present-day Buddhism we should remember that this system, in its beginning, was not, like Christianity, given a social basis and intended by its founder to be a world religion.

Jesus was conscious from the beginning of the universality of his mission. The kingdoms of this world were to become his kingdom. The Buddha had no such consciousness, and at first shrank from delivering his message, which was not the announcement of a kingdom at hand, but of a path whereby to escape from existence. He had no touch with society until there came to be a society of those who, as his disciples, had adopted the homeless life and become monks. It was only when, on account of the increase of his disciples, people complained, "Gotama is breaking up family life," that there had to be a relaxation of the rule so as to tolerate marriage and the family. Primitive Buddhism, therefore, had from its very nature no social gospel to proclaim. As, however, it quickly became a religion, and at present boasts of its millions of followers, it is only right that it should be asked to give an account of its stewardship, and to show what it has done or failed to do for those whose destiny has been committed to its care.

In studying the system in its practical working, we wish to see it at its best. It is thus we would have non-Christians study our own religion. We would not have them study it in Spain or South America, where the people are not permitted to read the Scriptures, but in England or the United States, where the Bible is an open book, and where the Gospel is preached in its purity. In no other land can Buddhism be studied under more favorable conditions than in Burma. Sir J. George Scott, K. C. I. E., a distinguished officer of the Government of India, who has spent his life in the Orient, particularly in Burma, and who as a writer is not partial to Christianity, has this to say of Buddhism in the lands where it now exists:* “The Buddhism of China is a mockery and a by-word, and the monks are a shooting out of the lip. Japan grew up under Buddhism. The religion is nominally wide-spread, but among the many good points of the Japanese devotionism is not one, and as Buddhists they are a mere empty name. The Buddhism of Siam is very lax. Most of the Siamese monks would be unfrocked if they lived in a Burmese village. The Buddhism of Tibet is a wild travesty, with a hierarchy at one end, which is foreign to the teaching of the Buddha, and flat devil worship at the other. There remain the Buddhists of Ceylon and the Jains of

**Buddhism at
its best in
Burma.**

* Scott's Hand-book of Burma, page 358.

northern India. As to the orthodoxy of the Cinghalese Buddhists there is no question. All believers acknowledge it, and make pilgrimages to the shrines near Adam's Peak. It is open to dispute whether the Jains, be they the sky-clad ones or the white-robed ones, are much better than dissenters, but their Buddhism, so far as it goes, is practical. The Burmese, of course, greatly outnumber both Cinghalese and Jains, and may, therefore claim to be the strongest body of professing Buddhists in the world. It may also be claimed by them, or for them, that they most nearly follow the teaching of the Buddha. And yet they are far from doing so unreservedly. But that is as much as to say that human nature is weak and easily led astray. The precepts of Buddhism are household words with high and low. . . . The ideas and language of the whole race are pervaded by Buddhism."

Burma is, therefore, the land in which to study Buddhism at its best. The European or American, however, is always at a disadvantage when it comes to setting forth the actual beliefs and practices of the people. He distrusts himself and his own impressions, and knows the more thoroughly the longer he has lived among them how little he can see into and understand their lives, how far they are from being all alike, and how easily almost any statement in one direction can be met by an equally true statement to the contrary. Moreover, if one

presents the facts faithfully and truthfully as he sees them from day to day, he is liable to be thought prejudiced, and to be charged with wishing to represent Buddhism at its worst. But one must state the truth, or what to him appears the truth, and surely this can be done in love.

When Buddhism was first introduced into Burma we do not know, but it was perhaps about the fifth century of our era; yet it may have been, as the Burmans claim, as early as 207 B.C. The matter is not important for our purpose. At Pagan, an old capital in upper Burma, there are monuments of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which show that at that time Buddhism had attained in Burma a condition of great splendor and power. It is safe to say that it has been the accepted religion of the people for at least a thousand years.

Before the Burmans were Buddhists they were animists, or spirit worshipers, and their condition must have resembled the present condition of the wild tribes on the Burma frontier, with some of whom, as the Chins, there is a racial affinity. These wild tribes are not difficult to evangelize, and as disciples they are teachable. The progress of the Christian Karens is well known, and the Chins and Kachins, when they become Christians, also advance rapidly. It was good material with which Buddhism had to work. What

**The Burmans
originally
spirit
worshipers.**

are the results as seen in the people of to-day? Are the Buddhists of Burma spiritually minded? Are they an intellectual people? What is their moral and social condition?

**Spirituality
among Bud-
dhists.**

It would seem vain to look for the spiritual in a system which denies that there is any such thing as spirit. But men are often better than their creeds. Among the fruits of the Spirit are mentioned longsuffering, kindness, meekness, self-control. (Gal. 5: 22.) These virtues were possessed by the Buddha in an eminent degree. There are some monks to-day and also some laymen in whom they are exemplified in a greater or less degree; but these are exceptions. The Buddhists of Burma, whether monks or laity, are not generally spiritually minded, far from it. In the villages and the cities there are no Buddhist churches, corresponding in their organization to our Christian churches, and centers of instruction, culture and inspiration for the people. In every village there is the monastery, and frequently a number of them, and there are the monks, who are, according to the system, the real followers of the Buddha; but they have no duties and obligations as shepherds and leaders of the people, who are left without guidance and instruction. About two and one-half per cent. of the Buddhist male population of Burma are wearers of the yellow robe.

In the beginning monasticism was doubtless useful to the Burmese. They were a wild people and it had a civilizing influence upon them, softening their barbarous customs and curbing their brutality. In the time of the Burmese kings the monks often interceded with the government for the people, obtained remission of taxes in times of scarcity and disaster, and temporary relief in cases where there was a local failure of the crops.

**Monasticism
in Burma.**

But looked at as it is to-day, monasticism in Burma stands condemned. Monasteries are centers of indolence instead of industry, and in some case they are hotbeds of crime. Gotama made the brotherhood democratic, which was a blow at caste, a great thing in his day. The monk was not primarily a teacher; he was a man who recognized the vanity of life, and withdrew from the world that he might by meditation conquer desire and enter the path of Nirvana. Why should not the door of the brotherhood stand wide open for the entrance of all such men? But in Burma to-day this wide-open door is entered too often by lazy, ignorant, and in cases not a few, *bad* men. The picturesque language of Victor Hugo may be applied to Burma: "He who says 'monastery' says 'marsh,' and the yellow robe is 'the winding sheet' of the thinking man."*

* "The yellow robe has much to do with the decay of national life in Burma. The beautiful tenets of the great Master were delivered

In addition to the five rules to be kept by the laity, and which will be mentioned later, the monk is burdened by such trifling rules as: not to eat after mid-day; not to dance, sing or play on a musical instrument; not to color the face with sandalwood, sleep on a high bed, or touch gold or silver. Such rules have nothing to do with a man's heart or thought life; they are merely external, and the monks' observance of them is of the same fashion. For example, a monk will cover his hands with a handkerchief and receive as much gold or silver as may be given to him; or more often, he will have one of his followers receive it for him.

**Buddhist
benevolence.**

The chief means of the laity for acquiring merit is by giving to the monks. This the monks urge upon them in all their preaching. In fact, their sermons are little else than exhortations to a

into the hands of these monks, who, I regret to say, instead of being an ornament to your society, are soiling it by their vices. It is not a very uncommon thing to hear of Phongyees being convicted of crimes of the worst sort, often gambling and murder. It is not an uncommon sight in Rangoon to see the yellow robes knocking about the streets at night buying perfumery and witnessing all sorts of amusements, pwes not excepted. If the gurus lead such open and scandalous lives, how could you expect the poor ignorant layman to lead a virtuous life!"

The above is an extract from a lecture delivered before the Rangoon College Buddhist Association, by Mr. M. S. R. Singhe, on the 25th of August, 1912, and published by the Association.

charity of which they themselves are to be the recipients. To give to the wise, according to the Buddhist view, is better and more profitable than to give to the poor and needy. The higher the recipient the more meritorious the offering. "The layman's life," it is said, "is full of danger, and almost inevitably involves demerit, but by well-placed gifts, seed sown in the right field,"—that is, offerings made to the monks—"he can be assuring a vast crop of merit. He may secure many births in heaven, and have but few in hell." Thus, the giving of the Burmese is in the nature of a commercial venture, and they naturally put their money where they think the best return upon it will be realized. Monasteries, pagodas, idols, robes and other articles for the monks—it is to these that the great stream of Burmese benevolence constantly flows.

The deepest, saddest, failure of Buddhism is in its having for its millions of followers no revelation of God. Yet the common people are not consciously atheistical. They say that Gotama is their God, and in their minds he is a deity of a sort. They have the greatest of reverence for him. He is called the Blest, the Perfect; he is the "joy of the whole world; the helper of the helpless; the deva of devas." It is true he is gone, but they have his images, and his last injunction was, they say, that they should worship these. They are of all sorts, molten images made in Birmingham,

**Buddhism and
idolatry.**

England, and molten images made in Mandalay; images chiseled from alabaster, and images carved from wood. They are of all sizes—the reclining Buddha at Pegu is one hundred and eighty-one feet in length—and there are little Buddhas only an inch or two long. Many of the people do not get beyond the images in their worship, but the more intelligent say that the image only helps them in their worship of the Buddha. There is no one to hear prayer, yet they pray, hoping in some way unknown to them to receive benefit.

Belief as to the Soul. The Buddhist doctrine of no soul in man is not the belief popularly held by the Buddhist people. The Burmans believe in an immaterial part in man's nature which may wander away temporarily, as in dreams and swoons, without causing death. When a wife dreams of her absent husband it means that their spirits, as we should say, have wandered away from the bodies and met in dreamland. This belief of the Burmans is an inheritance from the time when they were animists. Buddhism, in fact, is only a veneer over their former animistic faith. If you scratch a Burman Buddhist you will find a spirit worshiper.

The doctrine of Nirvana is too abstruse for the common people. Also Nirvana is too remote and too difficult of attainment. They prefer something more tangible, and also, if the truth must be told, something more carnal. Apart from Nirvana, there are, according to

Buddhism, thirty different states or conditions of existence. Four of these are states of suffering in which beings pay the penalty of their evil deeds. Of these unhappy states, one is the animal kingdom, comprizing all forms of animal life. Life as an animal, whether beast, fish, fowl, reptile or insect, is regarded as a punishment of sins. The denizens of the second and third states of suffering are purely fabulous beings. The fourth state is the Buddhist hell, which is divided into eight principal hells, and these again are subdivided. One day in some of these hells is equal to from 500 to 800 of our years, and punishment there may extend up to 16,000 infernal years. In the larger pagodas and places of worship, supposed scenes from the states of suffering are painted upon the walls, and also scenes from the states of bliss. One of the happy states is that of man, and six others are those of the nats, who are corporeal beings superior to man and occupy six different seats on the Myimmu (Meru) mountain. The life of a nat is one of sensual bliss and may last for 500 years, but that would be equal to 9,000 of our years. The nineteen remaining states are those of the Brahmas, who occupy the higher celestial regions. They are, however, too high above the people to have much of an influence upon them.

**States of
existence
according to
Buddhism.**

With so many attractive states of existence open to the man who can accumulate merit sufficient to attain them,

the doctrine of Nirvana has too much competition, and makes little headway among the Burmans. What the Buddhist wishes is to avoid rebirth in any of the states of suffering, whether as an animal or in one of the hells. He would like rebirth as a man, especially as a rich man; and better still, if he could attain to it, would it be to be born a nat.

The intellectual life and Buddhism. What about the intellectual life of the people? The Buddha was the "Enlightened One." Are the Buddhist people enlightened? His great work was to abolish ignorance; how has he succeeded in Burma? But we must look to the meaning of our terms. The Buddha was the "Enlightened One" because he thought his way through the mystery of rebirth and discovered the Four Noble Truths. The ignorance which he sought to abolish was ignorance as to the necessary connection of sorrow with existence. The system of the Buddha places all the emphasis on these so-called "truths," and regards everything else as of no importance. Questions of science, geography, astronomy, or even of metaphysics, are set aside as useless subtleties. Ignorance of these is not the ignorance which ruins. The Buddha thought that he had found the path which leads to the cessation of suffering, and he set so much by this "knowledge" that he cared not for any other. This was the spirit of primitive Buddhism. Nevertheless, Buddhism, as we see it in Burma, has its cosmogony, its

geography and its teaching upon almost all subjects. Everything lay open to the mind of the Buddha after he obtained omniscience, and what the Burmans now believe upon *these* subjects, as well as in religion, is what the Buddha *himself* is supposed to have taught. In answering the question, therefore, as to what the religion of the Burmans is, it is not enough simply to point to the Pali canon and primitive Buddhism, for their cosmogony, geography, and much of the folklore in which imagination runs riot, are to them, equally with the most ancient doctrine, part and parcel of the Buddhist faith.

It is impossible to present in this article, even in barest outline, the Burman view of the world. It is well set forth in Spence Hardy's well-known "Manual of Buddhism." Standing in the center is the Myimmo (Meru) mountain, which rises to a height of 84,000 yoozanas (a yoozana is $13\frac{1}{2}$ English miles), and has an equal depth below the sea. The part of the world which is the abode of men and animals has a diameter of 1,203,400 yoozanas, and its depth is 240,000 yoozanas. The half of this depth consists entirely of dust and the other half of stone. Underneath this is an enormous volume of water, and beneath this another volume of air. Beneath the air there is nothing but vacuity. This may serve as a sample of the Burman view of the world. It is an unquestioned belief with those who have not had a thorough training in a mission or a government school, and even

by some of these it has not yet been given up. It is only recently that the Government has made geography a compulsory subject for study in all the schools of the land. In some schools, not mission or government, but Buddhist lay schools, pupils are taught that the Buddhist view of the world is the true one, but that, nevertheless, when the school inspector comes to make the annual examination, pupils must say the world is round, and answer other questions in geography in harmony with the "English" view, so that they may be permitted to pass the examination. In the monastic schools, aside from reading and a smattering of arithmetic, nothing is taught save the subject of religion. The number of pupils in these schools is at present not great. Most men among the Burmans can read, but when they do so it is generally in a loud voice and with little thought as to the nature of the subject-matter. A good many women, particularly in lower Burma, can read. This is a result of missionary activity and example in the education of girls.

From what has been said as to their intellectual development, it will readily be imagined that the **Superstitions.** Burmans are a superstitious people. It is not undertaken in this paper, however, to set forth how superstitious they are. That would require a volume. They have a book called "Bedin," which is a work on astrology, explaining the signs of the heavens; another

book called "Deihton," explains the signs, good and evil, to be drawn from objects upon the earth. Omens are found in everything—the aspects of the sun, moon and planets; from the wood in one's house, boat or cart; from the howling of dogs, the singing of birds, and even from the involuntary movements of one's own body; a dog carrying a bone, a hen on her nest, the way in which one person meets another in the road, and what that person may be carrying, whether a broom, spade or a fish; the way in which bees make their comb, the way in which birds light upon the trees or the roof, the shape of the holes made by mice, and so on almost without end.

The credulity and superstition of the Burmans make them the easy victims of quacks and charlatans of every description. But let us not be uncharitable in our judgment. The Burmans are, perhaps, not worse than other races who have never had a knowledge of the true God. They are naturally a people of bright mind, but they are idolators, and idolatry is not the soil in which to grow intellect. "They that make them shall be like unto them." (Ps. 115:8.)

What is *the moral* and *ethical* significance of Buddhism? In the Buddha's teaching there are many beautiful ethical precepts. His life, too, seems to have been almost a perfect incarnation of what he taught. This has been to Buddhism a source of untold power. The Buddha, in his life and ethical teachings,

**The ethics of
Buddhism.**

has been often compared with the Christ. But, as a matter of fact, the ethical system of Buddhism does not work in practice, and a careful examination reveals many great weaknesses inherent in it and part and parcel of it. These it is possible here only to mention. First and greatest is the absence in it of any idea of God. Because of this it has been necessary for the Burmans to live lives practically atheistical, to the great detriment of their happiness, character and conduct. Another weakness is the pessimism which colors the whole system. Meditation is enjoined, but only on subjects best fitted to destroy one's desire for existence, such as the impurities of the human body, which are set forth with disgusting minuteness, and upon other subjects equally unedifying. A third defect is the absence of any appeal to the conscience, to the sense of duty. The Buddhist may observe the precepts or he may disregard them, it is a matter which concerns himself; and the moving consideration with him, according to the system, will be the merit which he will acquire in the one case or the demerit which will come to him in the other. The earnestness which Buddhism inculcates is thus put upon a low and very selfish plane. A system of morals in which the hope of reward and the fear of punishment are the only constraining motives cannot help men very far up the ladder of virtue.

In Christian lands the ministers of Christian churches are preëminently the leaders of the people in all great questions of moral and social reform. In Buddhism the conception is different. The monk enters the sacred precincts of the monastery for the purpose of seclusion. He is seeking for the calm and passionless state in which there is no such thing as desire. It was said of Jesus that he went about doing good. The same was said of the Buddha, but in this he was nobly inconsistent with the precepts of his own system. Yet the Buddhist monk, if he is an upright man, is by no means without influence in his village. As he goes quietly about, with shaved head and bare feet, and clad in the yellow robe, his dignified and solemn deportment radiate respect for his religion on all sides. But his influence is the silent influence of his manner and the garb he wears, not the influence of an active participation and fellowship with the people in the burdens and responsibilities, in the sorrows and trials, which they have to bear.

The precepts of the Buddha were at first given only to his immediate disciples, the monks. But later, as has already been said, the laity had to be recognized. Family life could not be broken up, and without the offerings of the laity the monks themselves could not exist. There are five rules which are binding upon all Buddhists, and the morality of the Buddhist laity may be fairly tested by the way in which these

The five precepts and how they are observed by Buddhists.

rules are observed. They are: 1. Not to take life. 2. Not to steal. 3. Not to commit adultery. 4. Not to lie. 5. Not to drink intoxicating liquors.

The rule against taking life applies to the whole animal kingdom. In Buddhism there is an identification of all the various forms of life, and hence a distorted morality with reference to man's relations to the lower animals. It tends to make the Buddhist more kind to animals, yet not to the extent which one might think; for an animal may be treated most cruelly without transgressing the command by actually taking its life. Under the Burman kings it was prohibited by law to kill any large animal, as the ox or buffalo. The result was that animals which died of disease or old age were eaten as food. This is still a custom in all parts of Burma. There are plenty of fishermen among the Burmans, but their business does not accord with their religion, and they get scant respect from the people, who however, freely buy their fish. They also buy beef and pork in the bazaar, the animals being killed by Chinamen or Mohamedans. They observe only the letter of the law, and the motive for its observance is the fear of the demerit which may come to themselves if they transgress it.

As to intoxicating liquors, the Burman people are not drinkers. They know how to prepare an intoxicating drink from rice and also from the sugar of the palm, but, with rare exceptions, they do not indulge in these. Their

usual beverage is water, and they also drink tea. In these days the evil example of Europeans is leading some of the young men of Burma to drink, but this is opposed to their religion and to the time-honored custom of their race.

As for the remaining three precepts—not to steal, not to commit adultery, and not to lie,—it is hardly necessary in speaking to those who know human nature to say that they are not kept. Prohibitions, mere negativisms, cannot make men righteous, for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh and the life is lived. Where is the non-Christian religion that can plant truth “in the inward parts,” that can give to men nobility and stability of character? It is certainly not Buddhism. Truthful, chaste, honest in business matters—the Burmans, as a race, are not. Yet there are individuals among them who are most estimable people. And there are Burman Christians who illustrate by their lives of virtue and piety, what the people might have been had Christ instead of the Buddha been their Master during these many centuries.

From what has already been said it will be possible to infer considerably as to social conditions among the Buddhists of Burma. We can touch the **Social conditions.** subject only briefly. The Burmans have never been over-crowded as have the people of India and China, and with the minimum of labor the rich soil of their country has given them abundant harvests. Hence they

have been well fed. Their religion could scarcely be thought of as a system devised to make men happy, but they do not take to heart its dreary pessimism. They look to their offerings for the merit which is to place them well in the next existence. Meanwhile they enjoy the present.

Their religious gatherings are of a festival nature; only a short time need be spent in worship and the rest can be given to visiting and having a good time. But with many of them "a good time" means sensuality and sin.

As elsewhere in the Orient, age gets reverence in Burma. Young people are respectful to their elders. Children are devoted to their parents, and will support them if they have need. In Burma there is little of actual want as compared with India and China. As a rule the Burmans are kind to those in distress and will feed the hungry; but organized charity is left to the Christians. Hospitals and homes for lepers and schools for the blind are not established by Buddhists in Burma.

The present is a time of transition and change in Burma. Influences from without have entered, established themselves and grown strong. Britain took over the government from the Burman kings and pacified the country. Western civilization entered. Steamboats whistle on the rivers and railway trains speed over the land. Communication is easy. Immigration from India and China is rapidly adding to

The present a transition period.

the population. Protestant missions were in Burma before the advent of the British, and the Roman Catholics were here before the Protestants. Missions are aggressive, instant in season and out of season. An impression upon Buddhism is being made; it is inevitable. The ties of religion are not so strong as they once were, and ancient customs are not so much regarded. This has its bad as well as its good side.

Just now we hear much of a "revival" of Buddhism. It is natural that this should be attempted, but impossible that it should succeed. It would be as easy to "square the circle" as to revive Buddhism. It has no principle of progress and is out of harmony with the conditions which environ it in Burma. Buddhism can not assimilate western thought and civilization without itself ceasing to exist.

But what has already taken place may serve to indicate for us what the course of development will probably be. Buddhism is doing something in Anglo-vernacular school work both for boys and girls; it has a tract society and a missionary society; there are also Young Men's Buddhist Associations in various parts of Burma. These methods have been suggested to Buddhists by the work of Christian missions which they see about them. They are not well supported, and not much has been accomplished. The gifts of the people are not easily diverted from pagodas, monks and

A "Revival" of Buddhism impossible.

Buddhism influenced by Christian missions.

monasteries. Yet doubtless the more enlightened of the Buddhist people will in the future tend more and more to work along these new lines. This is a direct result of Christian missions.

Buddhism has also been influenced by Christian teaching. Buddhists have been known to hold prayer-meetings, and to claim that "Nirvana is only what Jesus calls eternal life." They have said that God will reward them for their works of piety, and when asked where God is they have pointed upward. Buddhism will doubtless take over much more from Christianity and, of course, without ever discerning its distinctively Christian source.

While thus appropriating Christian teaching to itself and copying Christian methods of missionary work, Buddhists are at the same time proclaiming that Christianity has been discredited in the west, that in Europe and America it is dying out, but that Buddhism is the religion of evolution and in alliance with modern discoveries and western philosophy.

This is the present situation. As said above, it is a period of change and transition. Meanwhile, Christian missionary work is advancing hopefully. Ultimate conquest of the land is assured. It was Burma of which Dr. Judson said so many years ago: "The outlook is as bright as are the promises of God."

Gotama Buddha and the Changing of the Truth.

Of all the ways of perverting the truth, that which the Apostle Paul calls "changing the truth of God" and placing in its stead its opposite, the untrue, is the most disastrous and far reaching. So he describes the formation and growth of the pagan religions of his day; and the purpose of this article is to show by quotations from the sacred books of Buddhism that

Purpose.

Gotama, its founder, in the fifth century before Christ, had before him and considered and definitely changed the truth as to God the Creator, and man a living soul, and substituted for the true concepts his own imperfect, unproved and unprovable finite opinions.

Looking at the life about him he found it a ceaseless round of births and deaths, and he described it as the "Wheel of Existence." In the Sutta-Pitaka *ignorance* is used as a starting point, and in the Commentary of the learned Buddhaghosa upon the teachings of Gotama as given in the Pitakas, we find this question asked:

**First Cause
denied.**

But why is ignorance put at the beginning? Is it because ignorance, like the *natura naturans* of the Sankhya philosophers, is the causeless primary cause of the world?

And the discussion leads up to statements referred back to the Buddha himself:

Thus is to be understood the clause: *The Wheel of Existence is without known beginning.*¹

The asking of the question in this form recognizes the teachings of one school of the Sankhya philosophers, (who may be traced back for some three centuries before the time of Gotama,) as well known and as subjects of frequent discussion both at and before the time of Gotama and for nine or ten centuries thereafter; and proves conclusively that the doctrine of a "Great First Cause" was known to Gotama, was fully considered by him, but was definitely laid aside by him, and his own imaginings and illogical teachings given to his followers instead. The teachings of these Sankhya philosophers as to a Great First Cause, and the beliefs of certain Semitic peoples for many centuries before them in a Personal Great First Cause, are in harmony with the postulate of all modern science, that every effect has before it its adequate cause, and that every cause brings after it its adequate effect.

¹ Visuddhi-Magga, chap. xvii. [Way of Purity.] (171-175.)

The figures in parentheses refer to the pages in "Buddhism in Translations," by the late H. C. Warren of Cambridge, Mass., from which quotations are made; and because in that work the Sanskrit forms are used, *Karma* and *Nirvana*, they are so used in this article instead of the Pali forms, *Kamma* and *Nibbana*.

But the discussion of origins was one that would not down, and the illogical nature of the argument is well shown in the following quotation, which starts with an effect but denies its cause while recognizing the logical relationship of cause and effect:

Inasmuch, however, as when ignorance has thus attained to fruition in sorrow, etc., as being one of their causes, there is then no end to the succession of cause and effect, "On ignorance depends karma; on karma depend consciousness," etc.; therefore we have a twelve-membered Wheel of Existence without known beginning, continuing to exist by virtue of a concatenation of cause and effect.²

Having set aside a first cause in general, Gotama goes on to deny a personal first cause, and in the further discussion of origins this statement, with **Personal Cause denied.** a quotation from the Buddha, is made:

Now inasmuch as the factors of being, karma, etc., exist by reason of their own causes, ignorance, etc., therefore is this same Wheel of Existence wanting in any other cause for the round of rebirth, such as Brahma, etc., conceived of under the names of Brahma, Great Brahma, The Chief, The Victorious One, and is also wanting in any Ego passively recipient of happiness and misery, conceived of as "This I that talks and feels." Thus is to be understood the phrase: *Without a personal cause or passive recipient.*³

² Visuddhi-Magga, chap. xvii. (174.)

³ Visuddhi-Magga, chap. xvii. (175.)

In a sermon Gotama tells of a priest who wanted to know when the four elements which he held to compose the human body finally cease, and represents him as going upward to the gods who occupy the various heavenly abodes without finding any one who knows, until he comes to the abode of Great Brahma, who declares himself thus :

I, O priest, am Brahma, Great Brahma, the Supreme Being, the Unsurpassed, the Perceiver of All Things, the Controller, the Lord of All, the Maker, the Fashioner, the Chief, the Victor, the Ruler, the Father of all beings who have been and are to be. ⁴

Taking the priest to one side, Brahma is made to say :

O priest, these gods of my suite believe as follows: "Brahma sees all things; knows all things; has penetrated all things." Therefore was it that I did not answer you in their presence. I, O priest, do not know when these four elements, to wit, the earthy element, the watery element, the fiery element, and the windy element, utterly cease. ⁴

A thoughtful study of these quotations shows plainly that Gotama had before his mind the idea of a causeless primary cause, held by learned thinkers of his day; and he had the idea of a personal first cause, God the Creator, known to the Hindus from time immemorial as Brahma, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, lord and father of

⁴ Digha-Nikaya, xi. 67. [Second Basket.] (311.)

all beings; and he definitely denies all those more truthful concepts and affirms the contrary, degrading **Brahma** below his own level by making him admit that he cannot answer the simple question of a priest, which he himself, the Buddha, the "Enlightened One," answered by the simple denial of any known beginning or any personal first cause.

The denial of a personal Creator would naturally bring in its train the denial of a personal creation, a living soul. The human soul, the Ego, is denied, and long discussions are found in both the First and the Second Baskets of the Law to prove its non-existence, and to evade the consequences of such a denial. The discussion attributed to Gotama himself in the First Basket is too long to quote in full, for it takes up in successive paragraphs the question of form, sensation, perception, the predispositions, the consciousness, declaring of each that it is not an Ego, making this statment about each:

**The Soul
denied.**

Form, O priests, is not an Ego. For if now, O priests, this form were an Ego, then would not this form tend towards destruction, and it would be possible to say of form, "Let my form be this way; let not my form be that way!" But inasmuch, O priests, as form is not an Ego, therefore does form tend towards destruction, and it is not possible to say of form, "Let my form be this way; let not my form be that way." 5

5 Maha-Vagga, i. 6-38. [First Basket.] (147.)

Then in identical paragraphs each is shown to be transitory and therefore "evil," and this formula is applied to each :

This is not mine ; this am I not ; this is not my Ego. ⁵

It is not good logic to say that because each one of these designations does not in itself constitute a soul, therefore there is no soul ; but it satisfied Gotama, and he and his followers maintained it at length. In the great commentary we find these quotations :

Therefore have the ancients said,

No doer is there does the deed,
Nor is there one who feels the fruit ;
Constituent parts alone roll on ;
This view alone is orthodox.

* * * * *

"An Ego," say they, "doth exist,
Eternal, or that soon will cease,"
Thus two-and-sixty heresies
They 'mongst themselves discordant hold. ⁶

Therefore has it been said as follows :—

Misery only doth exist, none miserable.
No doer is there ; naught save the deed is found.
Nirvana is, but not the man who seeks it.
The Path exists, but not the traveller on it. ⁷

⁵ *Maha-Vagga*, i. 6-38. [First Basket.] (147.)

⁶ *Visuddhi-Magga*, chap. xix. (248.)

⁷ *Visuddhi-Magga*, chap. xvi. (146.)

Disputations regarding the heresy comprised in the belief in an Ego take up no small part of this commentary; but that the denial of an Ego really was a teaching of the Buddha is shown in a sermon in the Second Basket which definitely teaches as follows:

Whether Buddhas arise, O priests, or whether Buddhas do not arise, it remains a fact and the fixed and necessary constitution of being, that all its elements are lacking in an Ego. This fact a Buddha discovers and masters, and when he has discovered and mastered it, he announces, teaches, publishes, proclaims, discloses, minutely explains, and makes it clear, that all the elements of being are lacking in an Ego. ⁸

Gotama therefore had before him the doctrine of the soul, and admits that it would be eternal if it were existent; and he had also in mind the opposing doctrine of the soul ceasing at death. In another of his sermons he refers to the question as to whether the soul and the body are identical or separate entities; and he simply sweeps away all such questions by the denial altogether of any soul in man.⁹ The line of argument which proves to Gotama the non-existence of a soul in man, logically proves the non-existence of the man himself; but this logical conclusion Gotama apparently did not see, or else

⁸ Anguttara-Nikaya, iii. 134-1. [Second Basket.] (xiv.)

⁹ Samyutta-Nikaya, xii. 35-1. [Second Basket.] (167.) Not quoted.

deliberately refused to admit. He states a true dilemma by putting a belief that things have being as one extreme, and that things have no being as the other extreme; but teaches his "Middle Doctrine" beginning with the formula, "On ignorance depends karma," and going on to, "Thus does this entire aggregation of misery arise."⁹ This discussion, however, is foreign to the purpose of this article.

**Continuity of
life denied.**

The denial of an eternal soul in man carries with it the denial of life after death, of eternal life; but this is also specifically denied by the refusal to consider the question, with others, as having no reference to the attainment of Nibban, or Nirvana. Sutta 63¹⁰ of the Second Basket of the Law is a sermon given to show the uselessness of such questions as this, and is too long to quote, but in another sermon, Sutta 72, Gotama is held to say this of a dead saint:

All form by which one could predicate the existence of the saint, all that form has been abandoned, uprooted, pulled out of the ground like a palmyra tree, and become non-existent and not liable to spring up again in the future.¹¹

⁹ Samyutta-Nikaya, xii. 35-1. [Second Basket.] (166.) Not quoted.

¹⁰ Majjhima-Nikaya, Sutta 63. [Second Basket.] (117.) Not quoted.

¹¹ Majjhima-Nikaya, Sutta 72. [Second Basket.] (127.)

The doctrine of transmigration was taken over from Hinduism; but like everything else which Gotama borrowed, it had to be changed to conform with his negations of the beliefs of those who had preceded him. The Hindus believed that man is possessed of an Ego, a soul, and that at death this soul enters another body, the belief known as "transmigration." To deny the existence of a soul in man would logically deny the possibility of transmigration also; but Gotama retained the doctrine of transmigration while denying the existence of a soul to be reborn, or of anything other than karma, the resultant of the forces of merit and demerit through the whole series of preceding existences. This is the teaching of Gotama himself:

Transmigra-
tion.

Verily, Ananda, this name and form coupled with consciousness is all there is to be born, or to grow old, or to die, or to leave one existence, or to spring up in another. It is all that is meant by any affirmation, predication, or declaration we may make concerning anybody. It constitutes knowledge's field of action. And it is all that is reborn to appear in its present shape.¹²

The great commentaries repeat and explain this at length:

Therefore has The Blessed One said: *Karma allots beings to meanness or greatness.*¹³

¹² Maha-Nidana-Sutta. [Second Basket.] (208.)

¹³ Visuddhi-Magga, chap. xvii. (202.)

"Suppose, your majesty, a man were to light a light from another light; pray, would the one light have passed over [transmigrated] to the other light?"

"Nay, verily, bhante."

"In exactly the same way, your majesty, does rebirth take place without anything transmigrating."¹⁴

Eternal life, and life after death were therefore questions discussed very freely and at length, and positively rejected by Gotama.

It is evident that Gotama could not abide by his own illogical negations as to the existence of a soul and of continuity of life in this existence and the next, for in a sermon in the fourth book of the Second Pitaka he tells how one who has done evil in this life arrives after the dissolution of the body at a place of punishment—hell, where he is seized by the guardians of the place and hurried to Yama, the Ruler of the Dead, with a statement of his misdeeds, and the request is made: "Let your majesty inflict punishment upon him."¹⁵ All this is illogically absurd in the face of the persistent denial that what went to hell was what sinned on earth—or that there is indeed any soul to sin! These discourses prove the existence of a widely disseminated belief in a soul capable of sinning against its God, and of the continuity

¹⁴ Milindapanha, 71-16. [Questions of King Menander.] (234.)

¹⁵ Anguttara-Nikaya, chap. iii. 35-1. [Second Basket.] (255.)

of existence between this world and the next, to which he was compelled to bow even while he repeatedly denied all such existence and continuity.

The illogical position in which Gotama places himself in these negations is well shown further by the fact that he makes hell eternal, and declares that those who are reborn in that state do not die until their wickedness is exhausted—expiated by punishment. **Hell eternal.**

The description of the “chiefest of the hells” in this same discourse is as follows:

Symmetrical and square in shape,
Four-gated, into parts laid off.
Of iron is its bounding wall,
An iron roof doth close it in;
And of its glowing iron floor
The light with dazzling brilliancy
Spreads for a hundred leagues around,
And ever and for ay abides. ¹⁶

Furthermore, he grants a practical eternity of existence to those gods whom he calls “sublime gods.” To understand this it is necessary to take a glance at his cosmogony.¹⁷ He believed that the universe has definite periods of existence, and at the close of each period is destroyed, by water, by fire, or by wind, and **Gods practically eternal.**

¹⁶ Anguttara-Nikaya, chap. iii. 35-1. [Second Basket.] (258.)

¹⁷ Visuddhi-Magga, chap. xiii. (315-330.) Not quoted. See also page 25 of the preceding article in this book.

has its reconstruction or rebirth after each destruction ; but that none of these destructions reach up to the abodes of the sublime gods, although they reach up to the abodes of lesser gods. The time which elapses from its rebirth to the destruction of the universe is a world cycle, and covers millions of years. The gods in the abodes above that of mankind have increasing spans of life as they rise upward.¹⁸ Some of them live for nine thousand two hundred and sixteen millions of years and then die and are reborn ; some higher still have longer spans, twenty thousand world cycles, that is, more than twenty thousand millions of years ; and others higher still, eighty-four thousand world cycles. Oriental ingenuity could devise no better way to reduce to finite terms an indefinitely long or eternal existence. It may be noted in passing that the description of the destruction of the universe by water has curious resemblances to the Mosaic account of the flood, and the story of its rebirth to the account of the creation and fall of man,—resemblances found in the Assyrian story of creation, and in the creation story found among many primitive races of the present day.

Gotama is almost universally described as a reformer, and his religious or philosophical system a revolt against the abuses of Brahminical priestcraft of

**Gotama's
Decalogue.**

¹⁸ Abhidhammattha-Sangaha, v. 2-6 and 10. (290.) Not quoted.

his time. A reformer is not one who sweeps away a building which has outlived its usefulness and builds another in its place, anew from its lowest foundation stone to loftiest spire; but one who takes what he finds and repairs, alters, removes parts and substitutes other parts, possibly making change upon change until the whole structure is so altered that to many it appears wholly new, although careful inspection may reveal the patchwork of old and new. Such a reformer was Gotama. While Brahminism furnishes the structure to be reformed, and its teachings naturally form the main part of Gotama's affirmations or denials, a careful reading of the sacred books of Buddhism shows that he considered practically every philosophical and religious system of his time, borrowing here and setting aside there just as seemed right to his own mind. In the foundation of his teachings a main portion is called the "Noble Eight-fold Path," the following of which is to free one from the Ten Fetters which bind men to existence and suffering. Should we find any set of commands or precepts binding upon his followers, we might naturally expect them to have the closest reference either to the Eight-fold Path, or to the Ten Fetters from which freedom is to be sought. A study of the Eight-fold Path will show that the first four of Gotama's Ten Precepts have a natural relationship to three only of the eight paths, and that none of the precepts have any perceptible relation to the other five paths.

A comparison of the Ten Precepts with the Ten Fetters shows plainly that no connection exists between them as a whole, even if some limited relationship may be traced between some of the fetters and some of the precepts. It is certain then that no direct relation whatever exists between the fundamental principles of Buddhism and the codification of its ethical commands in the Ten Precepts.¹⁹

Just as the trained student of architecture picks out here a Grecian porch, there an Elizabethan arch, and there again a Gothic window in some of the buildings of this time and country, and assigns to each its proper place in the development of architecture, so the mind of the student seeks for an origin of these Ten Precepts, which have no counterpart nor parallel in any other of the great religions of India; and the only source from which an inspiration to formulate a decalogue can be traced is that fundamental and all embracing Decalogue, the possession for a thousand years before Gotama's time of the Hebrew people, who, a century before his time, had been scattered from their home in Palestine to the far eastern confines of Persia and beyond.

¹⁹ See page 373 of "Buddhism in Translations," and page 29 of Dr. Tilbe's "Pali Buddhism" for the discussion of the Eight-fold Path and of the Ten Fetters, which is too long to quote here.

Here are the Ten Precepts of Gotama, which are all negative and prohibit :

- I. Taking life.
- II. Theft.
- III. Fornication.
- IV. Lying.
- V. Using fermented liquors and spirits.
- VI. Eating at forbidden hours.
- VII. Dancing, singing, attendance at theatrical shows.
- VIII. Personal adornment.
- IX. Use of high seats or couches.
- X. Receiving gold or silver. ²⁰

The first command is understood as against taking any life, and is therefore broader than the command which we interpret as against the taking of human life only.

The most cursory comparison reveals the fact that the first four Precepts form a group identical with a group of four commands in the Mosaic Decalogue, which is the most striking fact revealed by any of the comparisons suggested in these paragraphs. These four are moral precepts standing in a class apart from the other six precepts, which are of comparatively weak or of no moral value whatever.

So great is the difference in ethical value between the first four and the remaining six precepts, that the opinion

²⁰ (397.)

is forced upon us that the four are borrowed from some strong moral code, and the rest added as the original work of the founder of Buddhism. If borrowed, then there is but one source from which they can have been taken, that is, the Mosaic Decalogue, and the remainder of that Decalogue must have been as distinctly rejected, an opinion in perfect harmony with Gotama's rejection of the fact of God and of the human soul, as previously set forth.

And so whatever value one may place upon this discussion in regard to the Decalogues compared, there remains the fact, which is disclosed by the sacred books of Buddhism and which cannot be gainsaid, that the sage Gotama, the founder of the Buddhist religion or philosophy, had before his mind definite concepts of truth regarding God, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and of man, a living soul with eternal possibilities, and that he just as definitely exchanged these truths and taught his followers the exact opposites, claiming supreme wisdom for himself instead :

I have no teacher anywhere ;
My equal nowhere can be found ;
In all the world with all its gods,
No one to rival me exists. ²¹

²¹ Majjhima-Nikaya, Sutta 26. [Second Basket.] (343.)

The student of comparative religion, who would fain believe that all the ethnic religions are steps upward in the process of human evolution, is therefore compelled sadly to admit that, whatever benefit may have been the relief afforded by the revolt against the rigors of Brahminical priestcraft, Buddhism is nevertheless a long step downward and backward from the old Semitic beliefs as to the existence and character of God and the nature and duties of the human soul.



DATE DUE

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



3 2400 00603 0310

ON
B8

Buddha, Buddhism, and Bu

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall.

